

Mercury Checklist for Offices and Everyone Else

Many common products have mercury in them. In some cases, the mercury serves a deliberate function, (e.g., in a thermometer) and in other cases, the mercury exists as a contaminant (e.g., bleach, because of how most bleach is made).

Many mercury-added and -containing devices and chemicals have available substitutes which have no or significantly less mercury, or are less likely to release mercury into the environment. These substitutions should be made to the greatest extent possible.

If items containing mercury cannot be removed because no feasible substitute is available, they should be identified and labeled, and plans should be in place to reduce the hazard of release while the item is in use, and to ensure proper recycling or disposal when you are finished with it.

Below is a list of items to look for in your office or other work environment. There is additional information on mercury in products following the table.

Priority Sources

Ck	Item
	Thermometers, including those for medical uses, cooking and weather. Mercury thermometers have a characteristic “silvery” color.
	Facility equipment that measures temperature, pressure or position, including wall thermostats, heating equipment gauges, flame sensors in ovens or dryers, some “silent” wall switches”
	Sodium hypochlorite (bleach) and other bulk cleaners which may be contaminated with mercury (this may require a laboratory analysis of a batch from your supplier)
	Bulk mercury for any current or former equipment, usually packaged in glass jars. This may be found during office clean-ups or remodeling and presents as a heavy silvery liquid.
	Old paints, fungicides and pesticides
	Fluorescent and mercury-vapor light bulbs (see below for more information)

Additional sources you may encounter and other details:

1. Facilities equipment and supplies not listed above
 - a. Mercury thermostats
 - b. Mercury vapor lamps, metal halide lamps, high-pressure vapor sodium lamps
 - c. “silent” light switches
 - d. mercury float control switches(like on a sump pump)
2. First Aid/Medical
 - a. Mercurochrome
 - b. Thimerosal (preservative in some liquid preparations)
3. Novelty Items and Toys: Many novelties and toys that light up or react to motion or pressure contain mercury. Items purchased before 2000 are more likely to contain mercury.

Additional Notes and References:

- Fluorescent light bulbs are often an environmentally responsible choice. Even though they contain mercury, they use significantly less electricity for the same amount of light and last much longer than conventional incandescent bulbs. Electricity generation can also release mercury into the environment. It is important that fluorescent bulbs are properly handled during and after use. The bulbs can be easily recycled. See: <http://www.mass.gov/dep/files/flampbiz.htm> for information on handling and recycling of bulbs. State contracts with mercury lamp recyclers are available; see FAC 26 on <http://www.comm-pass.com/>.
- The state's Operational Services Division (OSD) also has a program for Environmentally Preferable Purchasing (EPP), at <http://www.mass.gov/epp/enviro.htm>. Here, you can find information on purchasing equipment and supplies with reduced or no mercury added.
- Mercury-free bleaches and other cleaners are available.

Mercury Policies and Procedures at Your Facility

The following checklist, adapted from the Ohio EPA *Mercury Challenge Handbook* (for medical facilities), can be used to evaluate and improve your mercury reduction efforts. Not all of these questions and notes will be applicable to your facility.

Does your facility--

1. Have a policy regarding the purchase of mercury-containing equipment and products?
2. Track or have an inventory form for mercury containing equipment and products?
3. Have a policy on how to clean up a mercury spill?
4. Train staff in preventing and cleaning up mercury spills?
5. Have procedures for cleaning and refilling instruments containing mercury?
6. Label equipment that contains mercury?
7. Recycle mercury parts when you replace old equipment? (e.g., switches)
8. Require the manufacturer or vendor to disclose mercury content or concentration?
9. Have a policy to ensure mercury products are not disposed of down the drain or in the garbage?
10. Clean mercury out of traps, sumps and sewer lines?
11. Recycle spent fluorescent lamps and other lamps that contain mercury?
12. Recycle batteries containing mercury?